

Challenge '85 applications start rolling in

MONTREAL (CUP) — They hired 30 people in a week. They designed a cheap little one-page pamphlet, photocopied huge stacks of it, and distributed it to 95,000 business in the Montreal area, Laval and the South Shore. Then they patched together a quick string of phone extensions, hired three people to channel calls through the make-shift switchboard and got to work. "They" are government of Canada employees, and this is the new Tory way of doing things.

These federal employees have three weeks to find companies and institutions to hire 12,000 students in the Montreal area, under the Canadian government's Challenge/Defi '85 job creation program.

A non-profit corporation will receive funds to cover 100 per cent of a student's salary, but "priority will be given to career-related jobs (their emphasis) for students."

On P.E.I., the Employment Development Branch is having an easier time, because of the smaller-sized region involved.

"We've contacted 85 municipalities, all employer organ-

izations and non-profit groups on the Island," says spokesman Jake Baird.

About 120 forms have come back already, and staff expect a rush of mail this week.

The federal program for student jobs was announced much later this year than last because the Tories "spent a lot of time studying the problem before they announced their program," said Richard Desrosiers, one of the supervisors of the Montreal Challenge '85 operation. The forms which every employer has to fill out only arrived last week. Last year the employers had more than twice the time to submit applications.

But Desrosiers says there will be no problem because the bureaucrats will be working "night, week-ends," whatever it takes to make sure all the applications are in by Friday, March 22.

They will have to. Desrosiers says the analysis time for each summer job application will be much shorter than last year. But promotional material promises priority for career-related jobs, and also guarantees the government will not fund a job which replaces a worker

already laid off.

When first asked about streamlining and speeding up the analysis, Desrosiers said there will be "no consultation with local manpower." Later, when asked about verifying if students will take jobs from full-time laid off employees, he said: "We will go through the local manpower office to check this does not happen."

Desrosiers said Challenge '85 has "sent representatives to each of the universities, working with the manpower services and student unions to make sure the program is a success."

But Francois Desrosiers (no relation), Concordia University students' association vice-president external, who would have met with the representatives, said no one came to Concordia.

"The government should have come around and explained the program," Desrosiers said. But they didn't. "All I know is what I get from reading newspapers."

Martine Gagnon, McGill University student vice-president, said the federal representatives have not visited McGill either.

At Dawson College, a few

Challenge '85 posters, looking like promotion for a bake sale, have been posted on bulletin boards.

The head of Dawson's employment centre, who refused to give his name said "it's a bit late admittedly — I hope they extend the deadline."

But he said he thinks many students will benefit from the program. Two pro-

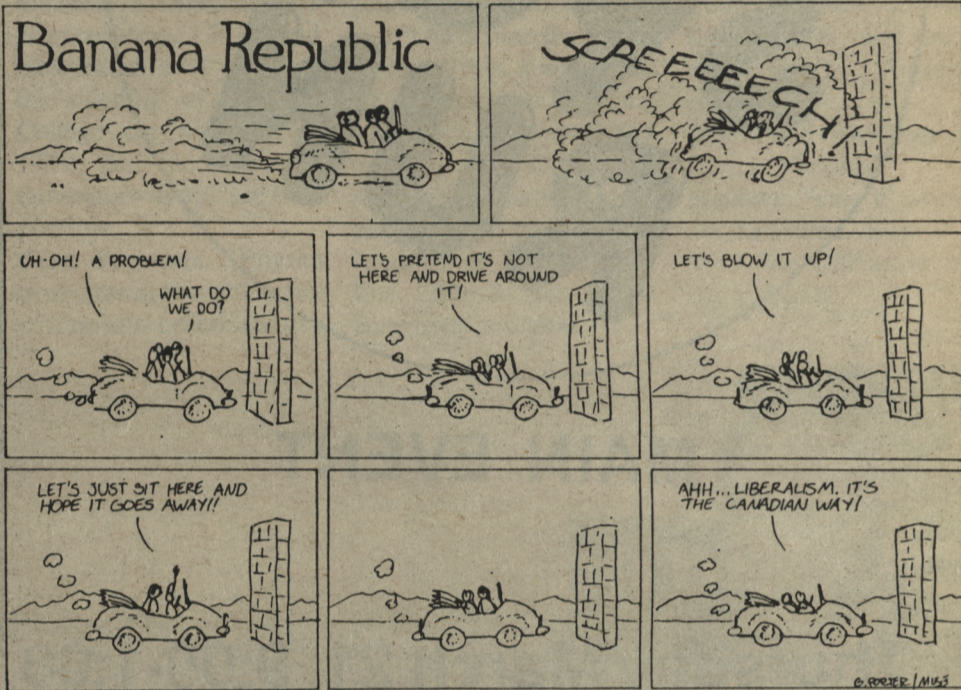
fessors at Dawson, one in engineering and one in finance, have special deals and will be wrangling federal subsidies so students in their classes can get Challenge '85 jobs.

Students in other disciplines are less lucky. In most cases Challenge '85 officers are asking them to take the forms around to employers themselves, to get companies

to sign up for the program.

On March 12, 300 applications had come in. The office expects 5,000 by March 22. But Desrosiers, the supervisor, looks on the bright side.

"The fact that we've got a program to work with is much more advantageous than saying 'no, there's nothing for you this summer.'"



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